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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2017
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SUBJECT: MEETING WITH BURUNDI'S FOREIGN MINISTER ON AMISOM
DEPLOYMENT

REF: BUJUMBURA 244

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary:

¶1. (S/NF) Burundian Foreign Minister Antoinette Batumubwira told USAU Ambassador Courville and Ambassador Yamamoto that logistical questions remain in preparation for deployment of Burundi's troops to AMISOM. The challenges are strategic lift, training, equipment, survey of the planned deployment area, and public relations to gain support from the Somali population. On domestic political issues in Burundi, the Foreign Minister noted the positive political developments in Burundi in the wake of the transfer of former party chief Radjabu from the powerful party chief position to other duties. President Nkurunziza needs international support as well as deft political maneuvering in his efforts to solidify his political power base. She suggested that support for the President's effort to articulate a comprehensive development plan as well as a political vision for the future of Burundi will ensure the President is able to lead the nation to greater stability. The Foreign Minister cautioned that in order to strengthen the political power base of the President, rather than replace officials, which would cause fissures in Burundi's politics, adding technocrats and experts will help balance the cabinet and ruling political party and move the country forward. End Summary.

AMISOM Deployment:

¶2. (S/NF) Burundi Foreign Minister Antoinette Batumubwira, who was passing through Addis Ababa on her way to Ghana, and Burundi Embassy Charge Bernadette Simvura met USAU Ambassador Courville and bilateral Ambassador Yamamoto (notetaker) April 2 to discuss AMISOM and Burundian internal political issues. The Foreign Minister said Burundi was committed to deployment of troops to Somalia in support of the international effort to stabilize Somalia. The success of the Burundian deployment depends on meeting several challenges which she said Burundi was hopeful of surmounting.

13. (S/NF) Strategic lift of Burundi,s troops is a priority concern. Other challenges include surveying the area where Burundian troops will be deployed, equipment necessary to meet the mission, and additional training requirements. The Foreign Minister also noted that public relations outreach to the Somali people was critical to success. Clearly articulating to the Somali public the mission of the Burundian troops and AMISOM will earn the support of the Somali public and ease anxieties.

14. (S/NF) The Foreign Minister suggested that in the future, the AU should look at streamlining peacekeeping operations from interoperability of troops from various countries, use of common equipment, and availability of strategic lift. Ambassador Courville reviewed current AU operations and the situation in Somalia.

Burundian Politics:

15. (S/NF) FM Batumubwira spoke of the need of the international community to expand support for President Nkurunziza. She spoke of the benefits of the recent transfer of former party chief Radjabu from the power political party chief position to other duties. While Radjabu still has significant influence, the President is now clearly primus inter paris within Burundi,s political milieu. The Foreign Minister suggested that the international community can best help the President consolidate his base by supporting the President,s efforts to develop a comprehensive development plan for the future of Burundi as well as to promote political stability of the

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country. In this context, to strengthen the President,s political power base, rather than remove the old political guard of the ruling CNDD party, it would be better to balance the political base by adding technocrats and experts in various fields. Such experts would help direct Burundi,s development.

16. (S/NF) A strategic road map will help the Burundian people understand the direction the nation is heading. Progress in Burundi,s economic development will raise support and cohesion of the polity. This will strengthen the President political base and popular support as he leads the nation to greater stability and economic prosperity after years of civil war.

Comment:

17. (S/NF) While we defer to Embassy Bujumbura for their assessment, the Foreign Minister described a positive picture of Burundi headed in the right direction not only in development and political openness, but also in human rights and laying the groundwork for a stable government. But it is clear that strong international support, working to support the Burundian government and people will strengthen the country which is still recovering from a decade-long civil war and promoting national reconciliation. End Comment.

18. (U) USAU Ambassador Cindy Courville and Embassy Burundi cleared this message.
YAMAMOTO